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Paper 02

South Station

In the southern part of Boston, there lies South Station’s “Great Hall”, a railway station that unites thirteen rail lines, people of different kinds, and has access to the main streets of south Boston. South Station which is located right in front of the Fort Point Channel was built and officially opened on January 1st 1899. With its location, it has made it easier for those traveling and moving from Back Bay Station to Summer Street. Its location makes it accessible to the many local attractions, not only through its exits straight to Summer Street, Dewey Square, nor Atlantic Street, but also through the Subway located underground that was created in 1985 which included the Red and Silver lines, giving the station it’s formal name, “Boston’s Gateway”. Because South Station is architecturally built large, it is capable of accommodating hundreds of travelers in its great hall.

Just arriving into the station and getting off the tracks, you enter through the large glass sliding doors, while trying to bypass the crowds of people and avoiding the smell of the burnt rubber. Through the crowds you find nurses, college students, businessmen running to catch their train while holding their coffee, PDA and briefcase, as well as high school students with their iPods blasted, looking confused and unsure where to head next. You see those waiting outside of the hall next to the tracks, since the weather is pleasant and it’s a bit crowded inside the hall. You finally enter the Great Hall and you spot people of all kinds, from a college student ordering their “white chocolate latte” from Au Bon Pain, to a middle-aged woman seated on a green metal chair, reading “Twilight”, which she had just bought from Barbara’s bookstore right behind her, in the center of the hall. Then you turn to the center of the hall and your eyes are grabbed by the attention of a young woman rolling her suitcases and holding the hands of her two young children, waiting patiently in front of the huge time board for their train to arrive. The children appeared to be happy after buying themselves a souvenir from the small retail shop. The hall appeared to be quiet, yet noisy. The sounds varied from the latte machines that were steaming the milk, people after people making orders, a British businessman shouting over his PDA, while others leaned against the bookstore quietly, playing around with their tickets/passes and looking at the large atrium clock that hung up on the ceiling in the center of the hall. Everything began to slow down. Minutes later, you hear an announcement, “Now boarding, 1:50 Providence Train on Track 4” and livelihood is brought back into the station. Within seconds, majority of the people rush to the sliding glass doors out to the tracks, while others continue to wait impatiently, checking their cell phones every now and then and looking at the big black time table.

You begin to notice a policeman walking around the grand hall, with a leashed tall black police dog, for security. While the dog sniffs around, your nose begins to become aware of the different scents around you as well. Your nose becomes acquainted with the smell of the freshly crushed beans that fills the entire hall. Then a young gentleman passes by with his hot, freshly baked pizza, which tempts you to grab a slice of your own. Heading towards Regina’s Pizza, you’re attracted by the smell of the fresh French fries, and the bread from Cosi, and you are unsure what to choose from. You notice another seating area next to Regina’s Pizza, where people that have a longer stay sit, yet all the food is only to-go. You walk up the stairs and realize the seating area is organized in a more formal way, as though in a restaurant, yet the tables only seat two people just like those found in the great hall.

You may begin to question, why is everything the way it is? Was there a purpose to the way the “Great Hall” was arranged? Why are there only thirteen tracks, yet twenty-two rail lines come in and out of the station? Why might the tables only seat two people? Taking a closer look at the travelers, you notice that not many people travel and stay in south station in large groups. You may even notice that the tables were made of, in green, not to ones comfort. The metal affect to the chairs as well as the green color, add an additional elegant touch to the hall, making it a more attractive place. This design makes a clear point that the travelers entering in and out of the station stay for only a little while, and take off as soon as their train arrives into the station. Then you note the way the tables are sorted out and how they are pushed aside, leaving the grand hall empty. You can quickly assume that an event was to be taken place in the center of the hall. You come to a conclusion that the tables were pushed aside in order for the travelers to be able to be entertained by the live performance. The big black time table remains hanging in the center of the hall. This makes it convenient to those in a rush, running up the marble stairs or the escalator coming from the subway. The commuter is able to view the time board, and runs to the track number they are to board on. The restaurants as well, were placed in the hall to the convenience of the commuters, giving a variety of choices of food to those on the go and at the same time, profit to the station is made.

Money has been an issue for South Station since World War I. When South Station was first opened, it connected with three other rails, The New Haven, The Old Colony and the Boston and Albany. During the depression and the World Wars, it became very expensive to handle the expenses of all three rails. The majority decided to disconnect the Old Colony. This caused a lot of inconvenience for many, so when the MBTA (Massachusetts Bay Transit Authority), was created in 1965, it took the title to the Old Colony, and it officially was back on the rails in 1997. The expansion of the railways made it more efficient for those commuting, allowing the railway to extend from Boston to South Braintree, and eliminating the “incredible congestion”.

By extending the railway and expanding the hall, more and more people were able to fit into the warm, welcoming lobby. Before the renovation, the waiting room was much tighter and designed like the trains, with rows and rows of seats. Now, the station has become more spacious, welcoming people of all kinds. You become aware that all the people at the station were at the same level. They were all commuters. Each and every individual paid the same price for the same ticket. They all waited in “Boston’s Great Room” for their next transition. People of different kinds are found to be running in a rush to catch the train. The conductors of the train, rushed them all, from the rich to the poor, to people with different nationalities, cultures, languages, and religions. Although each individual traveled for a different purpose, they all at the end were a commuter, riding the same train. From this, it becomes evident that our Boston community accepts one another and treats one another equally; all people of all kinds have the same rights.

South Station has been the solution for commuting for over a hundred years. It has been designed for the ability to hold hundreds, and hundreds of travelers in the Grand Hall. Its ease of access to many main roads of south Boston, has given the station stop a more diverse and interactive atmosphere. The station has become the center of Boston, where all commuters and travelers unite under the warmth of South Station, awaiting their next destinations.

Works Cited

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